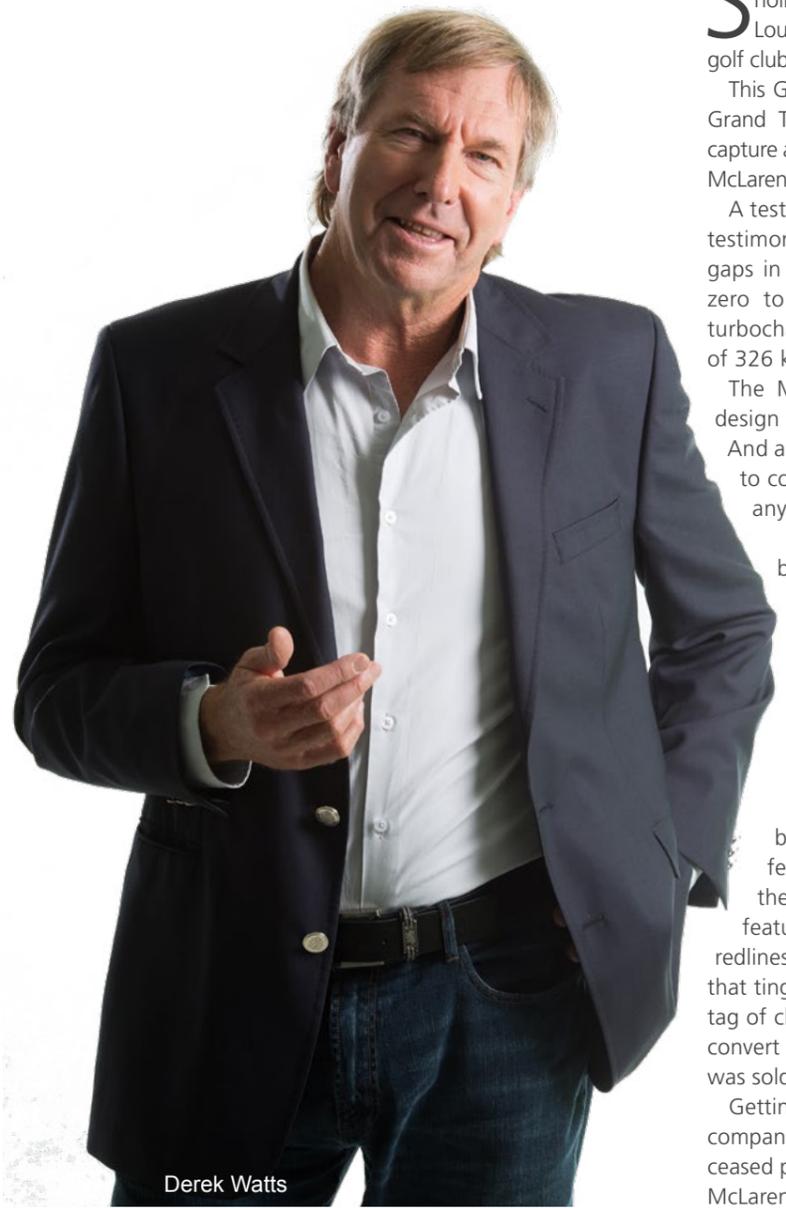


COLUMN

THE GOLFCLUBS GT



Derek Watts

Somehow I don't think Supercars were designed for family holidays. But at least with the you can fit a couple of modest Louis Vuitton bags up front and your gold-plated Honma golf clubs under the lengthy front-hinged glazed tailgate.

This GT – which stands for *Gran Turismo* in Italian, or simply Grand Touring in the Queen's language – was designed to capture a new audience and it is far more driver friendly than the McLaren 720S, without sacrificing the exhilarating performance.

A test drive, slightly hindered by Johannesburg traffic, was testimony to the GT's patience, but at least there were some gaps in the traffic to experience the howling three second zero to 100 km/h acceleration from the 4.0-litre, twin-turbocharged V8. Sadly, I never threatened the top speed of 326 km/h!

The McLaren GT is ravishingly beautiful – a tribute to design aesthetics balanced with aerodynamic efficiency. And although minimalism is the watchword when it comes to controls and instrumentation, don't confuse that with any lack of luxury and refinement.

Buying a McLaren means buying into a famous racing breed. And yes, the McLaren F1 team may be facing a few challenges this season, but that does not take away from McLaren's proud track record of more than 180 Formula One victories – second only to Ferrari.

Speaking of F1, can you believe it's 30 years since the launch of the Gordon Murray designed McLaren F1, the fastest production road car of its era and famous for the unique central driver's seat?

About 70 McLaren F1s are still running (our man bound for Mars, Elon Musk, crashed his), but if you're feeling nostalgic, Gordon Murray Automotive has the T.50 to whet your appetite. Like the McLaren F1 it features a driver-central cockpit, a Cosworth V12 that redlines at 12,000 rpm, and according to Murray, "rekindles that tingly feeling when you open the throttle." With a price tag of close to three million British pounds (don't even try to convert that to South African rands) the limited run of 100 was sold out before production began!

Getting back to McLaren Cars, incredibly, the Woking company was registered as "dormant" after the McLaren F1 ceased production, and only later emerged with a new name, McLaren Automotive, and renewed energy.



First out of the blocks was the McLaren MP4-12C which endured a million-mile odyssey from searing desert heat to sump chilling Arctic cold before hitting showroom floors.

And then a series of acclaimed models split into the Sport, Super or Ultimate Series for the collector who has no budget restraints (read stinking rich) and already has a McLaren or two in the garage. Like the stark, lean and track hungry version of the 720S, the McLaren Senna.

But now there is a game-changer, the first "clean sheet" supercar since the 12C, and... it's a plug-in hybrid. The McLaren Artura re-enters the age of electrification with a new twin-turbo V6, a powerful electric motor and a lightweight battery – the whole combination mated to a new eight-speed box. While the performance and weight may be similar to the GT, the Artura can cruise for about 30 kilometres on battery power alone and has a claimed combined fuel economy of under 6l/100 km. That must be with a very gentle right foot!

Along with the new policy of designating models with names rather than numbers, the Artura design is distinctive and highly desirable. And McLaren has an all-electric supercar in its sights by 2025.

So, there's your choice. GT or Artura? Or maybe hard core 720S? According to Grant Dryden, General Manager of the Daytona Group, the local distributor for McLaren, the GT starts at around R5m (depending on the exchange rate), add another 20% for the 720S and the local Artura pricing is yet to be announced. But you may want to get your order in soon. All deliveries have been delayed due to the ongoing semiconductor shortage that has hamstrung manufacturers around the globe.

All the same the McLaren GT could be in one of your garages by October.

At least you've got time to improve your golf handicap, and... shine those gold-plated Honma golf clubs.